 FO32 Mongo FO32
Nkundu
Pygmies FO4
Batswa

Chapter V. Obstacles to Marriage

M 582 There is no specific term in Lonkundo for an "obstacle to marriage." General terms are used, as in our European languages.

Our people make no distinction between obstacles which nullify a marriage and those which are prohibitive in nature. Therefore, we will simply speak of obstacles without making any distinctions among them.

Article I. "Race"

M P 582 563 The question of a diversity of races can be considered only with reference to the Batswá. Marriages with them are strictly forbidden. Nkundó rules of behavior are very strict with respect to relations between Baotó and Batswá. It is unheard of that opposite sexes of the two races should mingle, even for a simple conversation. There would then obviously be no question of marriage.

M P 563 588 Among the Bilángi, a Batswá tribe of the Injólo of the Salonga-Luilaka (who absolutely refuse to be called Batswá or Balúmbe), there have been two cases of such unions to my knowledge. Two Baotó women were involved, both, by a singular coincidence, from Lotángonda (Injólo, Engónjo). One was Njalí, daughter of Yole and sister of Lomólo, the other Nsombola, sister of Limpema.

Njalí was taken in marriage by Bakao of Ikindatói. She wanted children desperately and, not having had any by her two successive Nkundó husbands, she ran away to the Bilángi in hopes of having better luck there. [242] She was not disappointed in her expectations. She gave birth to four sons: the eldest, Bonkono, who died some years ago; Bakao (Georges), who died in 1933; two sons, Bonkoni (Louis) and Joke (Henri), who are still alive. In 1933 the descent of the four numbered thirteen sons, six daughters, four grandsons, and one granddaughter. But there was never a legitimate marriage between Bakao and Njalí since no bride price was paid. And the descent have formed a small Bilángi clan, which is dependent on the grandmother's clan (Ilongó of Lotángonda).

Nkundu
Pygmies FO4
Batswa

PM 563 588

The second case is somewhat more recent. It occurred at the beginning of the European penetration of the area. During the general upheaval at that time, the natives of Bosika village (Bilingi of Lingonju) took advantage of the absence of many adult men whom the soldiers had taken on an expedition against the Mbole. They were able to capture a woman named Nsombola and take her home with them. She loved one of the men of Bosika, and after many years, he "purchased" her for the price of two slaves. She lived there happily until quite recently, when she was overcome with a desire to return to her own race. (She leaves no descendants.)

In this second instance, then, the Nkundó bowed to the woman's wishes and, in accepting a bride price for Nsombola, gave in to the inevitable. This example shows that they can be flexible in their customary requirements if the situation warrants it.

Nevertheless, there have been no admirers or imitators of these exceptional cases, and the opposition against unions between the two races remains firm. Mixtures are not desired. The position which the hybrid family of Bakao occupies in the village of Lotingonda is highly significant. For it is an exception to the rule applicable to such cases, namely, that a child who has no legitimate father is incorporated into his mother's clan. The descendants of Bakao and Njalf are dependents of Lotingonda and are a part of it politically, but [243] they are not included in the kin group. For they have inherited a Bilingi nature from their father, and therefore, contrary to the logic usually applied, they have not become relatives of their ancestress. Here, too, the "racial principle" has prevailed against common law.

PM [851]

PM 563 588 595

Nor does one hear of temporary relationships or concubinage between them. I know only of one instance; its outcome was not happy, and it did not invite imitators. It happened around 1913. A certain polygamist, Lokóta of Bokeke (Bombwanja) fell in love with the wife of Bonkingó, who at the present time is headman of Bosóla (Batswa of Ntómbi, Bombwanja). He became the laughing stock of the entire region, but because of his love, it did not deter him. In his own household, however, the situation was more serious. One of his wives (Ambansele) soon left him. The others refused him their bodies

and prepared for divorce. Consequently, Lokôta was obliged to give up his unreasonable love, and in the end everything was set to rights. (1)

1. No children were born as a result of that relationship.

Instances of mixing have occurred because of colonization, outside the usual environment, between Batswá and members of tribes which are not acquainted with this race. At the Bokôma Mission there lives a Botswa woman of the Ekonda who was taken away by foreign soldiers and had two children by a Mbole man. These children are held in contempt by both the Baoto and the Batswá in the vicinity, and they will only be able to marry if they settle in their mother's clan.

In the veterans' village of Ingende there lives a Botswa of Bodiama (Bombwanja) who married an Urundi woman while he was a soldier in the war. She probably did not know her husband's race. They came to this region, and the marriage has proved to be excellent, and the wife has always remained deeply attached to her husband. Their five children are not treated with the slightest contempt. Their situation would undoubtedly [244] be different if they lived in truly native surroundings, where they would certainly be incorporated into the Batswá.

The introduction of the Batswá into the economic life of the Europeans and their training in it may favor, and result in, a mixing of the races. The wealth thus placed within their reach may serve to seduce some of the more lascivious or greedy Baoto women, particularly those who always hang about the centers, camps, and markets and in whom vice has extinguished all feelings of propriety and honesty. The danger increases when Batswá bachelors are hired as laborers for some purpose and sent far from home to do their work, especially if the proportion of married men in the group is insufficient. This is not a description of an existing situation -- for the barrier between the two races is still impassable -- but of a possibility that is not out of the question, as an occurrence in 1932 would indicate. The